



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

OCT 17 2012

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing to update you on the Department of the Interior's preparations to utilize the Cobell Settlement's Trust Land Consolidation Fund. Congress authorized the Department's use of this Fund to purchase individual Indians' fractionated interests in trust and restricted lands. Purchased interests will remain in trust and be consolidated for tribal use, without a lien, thereby freeing up those trust lands for beneficial use by tribal communities.

The Department cannot begin to administer the Trust Land Consolidation Fund until all appeals related to the Cobell Settlement are final. We are hopeful that the remaining appeals will be resolved soon. When that occurs, we will contact you to ask for your assistance in moving forward with the Department's land consolidation program.

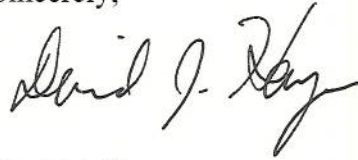
In the meantime, I wanted to give you an update on our preparations. First, the Department held seven consultations with tribal leaders in the summer and fall of 2011 to obtain your input on how we should implement the Department's trust land consolidation program. These government-to-government consultations led to our release of a draft implementation plan in February 2012. As indicated in that plan, not all reservations contain land eligible for purchase by the Department. Many of you provided additional comments on the draft plan, and we expect to release an updated draft plan in the coming months. I would like to thank those tribes who have participated in consultations to date, and I look forward to further tribal feedback once the updated version is released.

Second, I also wanted to share with you some of our staffing actions for the Department's trust land consolidation program. Because of the program's size and importance, we have put together a team that will operate out of the Office of the Secretary and report to me, as the Deputy Secretary, working closely with staff from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of the Special Trustee, along with other bureaus. Mr. John McClanahan will be the Program Manager for this effort. He will be joined by Mr. Anthony Walters, who currently is serving as Counselor to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs. In addition, Mr. Darryl LaCounte, Senior Advisor to the Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, will be part of the core management team. I would also like to mention the recent addition of Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn, who will play a key role in the future implementation of this program.

Third, I wanted to assure you that we intend to work closely with the tribes in identifying priority lands for purchase under the Department's land consolidation program. We are committed to taking full advantage of the experience that a number of tribes have had in operating successful land consolidation programs. In that regard, if your Tribe operates a land consolidation or land acquisition program that you believe provides a potential model for identifying lands that should be targeted for potential purchase, communications with landowners, or the use of appraisal techniques, please contact us and share your experiences.

Thank you again for your participation in the Department's planning process. We look forward to continuing to receive the benefit of your input as we move forward with our planning effort. In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like to engage in follow-up on these items, please contact Mr. Anthony Walters at Anthony.Walters@bia.gov or (202) 513-0897.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Hayes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David J. Hayes